

Organizational Cynicism: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Organizational Cynicism explains the reasons behind people having negative attitude towards the organization. This study reviews published research papers between 1989 to 2018 on organizational cynicism. It has been observed that the studies so far have been focused on foreign context. However, there are researches based on India still there exists a need for understanding the concept of organizational cynicism by few more different angles. Based on the literature review, this paper makes an elucidation on the Indian and International research outcomes of organizational cynicism from the following specific aspects: encapsulates the evolution of organizational cynicism, dimensions and conceptualization problems of Organizational cynicism, relationship of organizational cynicism the input and outcome variables, directions for future study. Vast literature has been reviewed across the globe on this topic to know it deeply. The results of the study revealed that Organizational cynicism has impact on job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational justice, organizational commitment, organizational trust, and employee turnover intentions. Our study contributes to a better understanding of Organizational cynicism and its relationship with other variables.

Keywords: -Employee turnover intentions; Job performance; Organizational Cynicism; organizational citizenship behavior; organization justice; organizational commitment; organizational trust.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dean et al. (1998) have answered by introducing the concept of Organizational Cynicism. Organizational cynicism refers to an individual having negative feeling like anger, disappointment and hopelessness for both the staff and organizations (Ozler Ergun et al., 2010). Organizational cynicism is an employees' belief that his organizations lacks honesty, trustworthiness and integrity. More specifically, expectations of morality, trustworthiness, justice, integrity and honesty are violated (Ince & Turan, 2011). Andersson (1996) defines organizational cynicism as general belief or specific attitudes of disappointment, anger, group insecurity, hopelessness, mistrust in institutions or persons, ideology and social skills. Abraham (2000) defines organizational cynicism is the belief that an organization lacks honesty causing negative behaviors when it is combined with a strong emotions and feelings.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM

Organization cynicism is an attitude that employee can form about their organizations policies, procedure, rules or other elements in the organization. It refers to a certain belief that employees hold about their organization lack integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and sincerity (Dean et al., 1998).

It arises when employees believe that their organization is lacking in honesty. It is employee's perception that their expectations related to morality, integrity, justice and honesty are despoiled. Organizational cynicism is basically people who are negative bring into organization, but these attitudes or feeling are shaped by their experiences while they are working in organization (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003).

2.1 DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM

Organizational cynicism is a negative feeling or attitude with three dimensions namely cognitive, emotional and behavioral towards organization where an employee works.

2.1.1 Cognitive Dimension

It basically refers to employee's disbelief in their organization (Urbany, 2005). Organizational cynics believe that the practices and procedure of their organization betray their trust and also believe that choices of organizational direction are based on self-interest (Goldner, Ritti, & Ference, 1977).

2.1.2 Emotional Dimension

It is associated with variety of negative emotions (Dean et al., 1998). It contains some powerful and sensitive emotions like disrespect, anger, boredom and shame (Abraham, 2000).

2.1.3 Behavioral Dimension

Organizational cynicism is a behavioral tendency for those who hold cynical attitudes in the form of strong criticisms towards the organization. Employees also use sarcastic humor to express cynical attitudes (Dean et al., 1998). Employees with cynical attitude affect their job performance negatively (Akuzum, 2014; Nefai, 2015).

Dimensions	
Cognitive Dimension (belief)	It is a belief that organization's policies and practices lacks integrity, honesty and sincerity.
Emotional Dimension	It comprises of several emotions and sentimental reactions like experience distress, disrespect, disgust and anger towards organization.
Behavioral Dimension	It is a behavioral tendency for those who hold cynical attitudes in the form of strong criticisms towards the organization.

Source: Abraham, 2000; Dean et al., 1998 ;Akuzum, 2014; Nefai, 2015

3. METHODOLOGY

We have done an electronic search for this construct through EBSCO host, Google search, Emerald and ProQuest databases. This initial search yielded many articles in diverse journals, of which conceptual and empirical research papers were included in the study. The literature search is limited to the English language only and it includes the period from 1989 to 2018. This research study is arranged into the following sections. The first section explains the conceptual definition and dimensions and second section explains followed methodology. The third section, factors influencing organizational cynicism(OC), presents a brief about the factors influencing OC, this section is lastly followed by direction for future research and conclusion.

4.FACTOR INFLUENCE ORGANIZATION CYNICISM

4.1Demographic factors and Organizational Cynicism

Based on the research outcomes so far, the antecedent variables of organizational cynicism are demographic variables and job characteristic factors.Kalağan, G., & Aksu, M. B. (2010). found that gender and age are not found significant variables in organizational cynicism. Marital status is only found a significant variable in the sub-scales "behavioral", and also length of service is only found a significant variable in the sub-scales"cognitive". Mirvis& Kanter (1991). revealed male employees have the higher level of organizational cynicism than female counterpart. Lobnika&Pagon (2004) who researched on police officers in found significantly higher level of organizational cynicism in female police officers in Slovenia. However, some other researchers like Andersson and Bateman (1997), Efilti et al. (2008), Erdost et al. (2007), Fero (2005), Güzeller&Kalaan (2008), James, (2005), Tokgöz&YÖlmaz (2008) did not find any relationship between organizational cynicism and gender of employees. Efilti et al. (2008) found that married/engaged participants have higher level of organizational cynicism in the sub-scale "behavioral". Age is not found a significant variable in organizational cynicism of the research assistants.

4.2Organizational Justice & organizational cynicism

Does negative feeling of unfairness and injustice convert into cynical behavior i.e. organizational cynicism? Organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions that they should be fairly treated in organization (Greenberg, 1988). There are three types of justice commonly researched: distributive, procedural, and interactional.Distributive justice is conceptualized as the fairness associated with decision outcomes and distribution of resources. The outcomes or resources distributed may be tangible (e.g., salary, perks) or intangible (e.g., recognition, praise) (Greenberg,

2001). Much of the research on distributive research was derived from the work Adam(1965) on equity theory which suggested that equity theory can determine the fairness of an outcome. Perceptions of distributive justice can be stimulated when outcomes are perceived to be equally applied (Adams, 1965). After ten years of Adams' (1965) study, Thibout and Walker (1975) suggested a new dimension of organizational justice, namely procedural justice. Procedural justice focuses on the processes which are used to determine the outcomes. Bies and Moag (1986) introduced the concept of interactional justice as a part of organizational justice. They defined interactional justice as "the quality of interpersonal treatment received during the enactment of organizational procedures". Aküzüm, C. (2014), found that teachers' level of organizational justice affects their perception for organizational cynicism negatively and significantly. He further concluded that teacher's perception for organization justice and cynicism together affects organizational performance significantly.

Tabatabaei, S., & Bigdelli, E. (2015), empirically proved that Organizational justice has a significant negative impact on cynicism. Shaharruddina, et al. (2016), summarized that organizational justice is negatively influencing organizational cynicism, where organizational cynicism may reduce if organizational justice is high and confirms that organizational justice is one of the most important factor that may overcome organizational cynicism. Danaeefard, H., & Boustani, H. R. (2016), showed that organizational justice negatively predicted employee's cynicism and fairness perceptions reduce individuals' cynicism toward the organization through enhancing the individuals' commitment and trust in the organization with regard to relation between trust and cynicism. Colquitt et al. (2001), suggested that low levels of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice are related to negative reactions of employees towards their organization. By this we can conclude that an absence of justice should lead to cynical, negative, attitude of employees toward the organization. *In sum, we postulate that organizational justice is negatively related to organizational cynicism.*

4.3 Organizational cynicism and organizational trust

Cummings, L. L. & Bromiley, P. (1996), defined organizational trust as a belief of individual, group or group of individuals towards the organization which makes them faithful, committed and honest. Davis & Gardner, 2004; Mayer et al. (1995), suggested that organizational trust emphasizes on presence of trustworthiness, organizational cynicism would imply on low level of trustworthiness. Burçak et al. (2017) significant negative relationships between OT and OC have been identified. Increased cynic attitudes of the working individual towards the organization lead to a decrease in the confidence level. Durmaz E. et al (2012). identified negative relation between organizational cynicism and organizational trust. Employees' cynic attitudes towards their organizations can decrease their positive attitudes towards organizations and seen that cynic attitude decrease trust. And this also causes negative outcomes in the organization's performance. Dean et al. (1998) argued that a lack of trust is possibly due to a lack of positive experience with the other party, whereas cynicism is "almost certainly based on [negative] experience". *We conclude that trust (positive aspect) and organizational cynicism (negative aspect) are negatively related to each other.*

4.4 Organizational cynicism and Employee Turnover Intention

Turnover intention may be defined as the employee's intention to voluntarily quit the organization. Intentions are important to study as they predict an individual's perception, attitude, judgement and conscious willfulness (Mobley et al., 1979). Employee turnover is a much-studied phenomenon (Shaw

et al. 1998). But there is no standard reason why people leave organization. Employee turnover intention is influenced by variety of reasons namely organizational factors, job related factors, individual values and characteristics and labor market expectations, including low satisfaction with their jobs and employer, limited promotion, negligible growth opportunities, a better opportunity elsewhere, disapproval of organizational changes and restructuring. The chances of employee turnover are very high with more cynicism since high level of stress and burnout are associated with organizational cynicism. In addition, the organizational cynicism brings negative results to the organization in terms of quality of care, satisfaction and job performance (Barefoot J et al, 1989; Wanous J et al, 2000). Khan, M. A. (2014), proved that organizational cynicism will positively influence turnover intentions.

Further studies should investigate organizational cultural variables and variables responsible for variation in results when conducted on different industries. Nazir, T., & Ahmad, U. N. B. U. (2016), also empirically proved that Individuals with cynical attitudes think less of their coworkers and in particular retain negative feelings towards the employing organization. Such attitudes leave an individual with non-productive and pessimistic approach towards the environment. As turnover intentions have been found to be among the strongest predictors of turnover, it is critical to understand the factors that influence an individual's intention to quit (Allen et al., 2010). *Thus, we conclude that there is a positive relationship between organizational cynicism and intention to quit.*

4.5 Cynicism and Job Performance

From a theoretical standpoint, organizational cynicism has been proposed to negatively influence job performance. Arslan, M. (2017) findings reveal that organizational cynicism has a significant negative relationship with employee performance. Bayram, A., Bickes, D.M., Karaca, M., & Caki, C (2017) proved that organizational cynicism had negative and significant effect on job performance. Supriadi & Sefnedi (2017) also found that performance of employees and organizational cynicism is negatively related. And also implies that employees who have negative feelings towards their organizations perform poorly. Rehan, M. (2017) also proved that negative relationship with employee's performance which means more the organizational cynicism less will be employee's performance. *So, we conclude that three dimensions of organizational cynicism i.e. emotion, behavior & cognition had significant and negative relationship with employee's performance which means that increase in either of the dimension will reduce the employee's performance.*

4.6 Positive Organizational Support (POS) and Organizational Cynicism

POS refers to Employee's "beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986, p. 501). It also implies that an employee will receive assistance from the organization to effectively carry out one's job and handle stressful situations. Employees may use POS as an indicator of the organization's malicious or gracious intention to recognize employees effort Lynch, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 1999). Employees who feel that their effort are not valued by the organization (i.e., low POS) are likely to develop feelings of betrayal and dishonesty. Thus, if employees have low positive organizational support, then they are likely to have higher levels of organizational cynicism. Özgür, S. (2015) stated that there is a significant and strong negative correlation between perceived organizational support and organizational cynicism. Research indicated that POS influences organizational cynicism, such that employees who perceive less support from their organization are more cynical toward it (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008; Treadway et al., 2004). *So, we*

conclude a negative relationship between Positive organizational support and organizational cynicism.

4.7 Cynicism and Job Satisfaction

Originally defined as a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976, p. 1300), job satisfaction is now conceptualized as an attitude consisting of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Hulin and Judge (2003) defined job satisfaction as the evaluations of one's job, emotional responses to events that occur on the job, and prior behavior. Research has explored a number of antecedents for job satisfaction, including job complexity, organizational climate, and justice perceptions (Schleicher, Hansen, & Fox, 2010). We propose that individuals who have higher levels of cynicism toward the organization will have lower levels of job satisfaction. This is because their cynical attitude toward the organization can extend to their attitudes to their job through mechanisms such as affect infusion; the negative feeling resulting from cynical attitudes toward the organization may diminish evaluations of their job experiences (Forgas, 1995).

Consistent with this, researchers have found a negative relationship between organizational cynicism and job satisfaction (Eaton, 2000; Wanous, Reichers, & Austin, 1994). Özgür, S. (2015). identified that job satisfaction and organizational cynicism is also significant and negative. Johnson and O'Leary-T Kelly (2003) found a negative relationship between cynicism and satisfaction.

4.7 Organizational Cynicism and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to the goals of the organization (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). It reflects the psychological attachment an individual feels toward the organization (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986), and is experienced through three mindsets: affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The commitment most relevant to organizational cynicism is affective commitment, which is the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Nafei, W. A., & Kaifi, B. A. (2013). suggested significant relationship between the dimensions of organizational cynicism (the cognitive dimension, the affective dimension and the behavioral dimension) and organizational commitment at Teaching Hospitals in Egypt. Individuals with high organizational cynicism are characterized by a distrustful attitude and negative affect toward the organization. Because a certain level of trust, or a belief that the organization will have employees' interests in mind, is critical for organizational members to establish deep emotional bond with the organization, organizational cynicism should be associated with low levels of commitment to the organization. This proposition is consistent with research demonstrating a negative relationship between cynicism and organizational commitment (e.g., Eaton, 2000; Tesluk, Vance, & Mathieu, 1999).

4.8 Organizational Cynicism and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organ (1988) defines organizational citizenship as "the demonstration of optional effort and extra role behavior beyond the standards and job descriptions defined for that individual in the working environment by the individual." Turkmen, F., & Aykac, E. (2017). identified the relationship between

organizational cynicism and organizational citizenship behavior. They concluded that there is a significant and negative association between the subdimensions of Cynicism Namely Cognitive, Affective and General Cynicism attitudes with all Organizational Citizenship Behavior subdimensions (Altruism, Conscience, Courtesy, Gentlemanly, Civil Virtue and General Organizational Citizenship Behavior). However, while the sub-dimensions of Organizational Cynicism display a positive medium and strong association among themselves, the subdimensions of Organizational Cynicism display a positive and medium, strong and very strong association among themselves.

4.9 Organizational Cynicism and Job Embeddedness

Nafei, W. (2015), revealed that job embeddedness was positively related with job performance and negatively with organization cynicism. *Further research can be done on impact of job embeddedness on job attitudes of employees and organization cynicism.*

4.10 Research in Indian Context:

Dhar, R. L. (2009), revealed that employees develop cynical attitude towards their organization on the basis of the experiences that they have while being associated with the same. Other findings suggest that generating greater insights into the various facets of organizational cynicism with reference to the I.T industry in the Indian scenario is important for both the development of knowledge regarding constructs of organizational cynicism and conceptualizing contemporary organizational life.

Nair, P., & Kamalanabhan, T. J. (2010), examined if cynical attitudes predicted unethical intentions among Indian managers when faced with a range of ethical dilemmas. The findings clearly point out that employees who were more cynical were less likely to be ethical in their intentions. In addition, as there are indications of unethical tendencies being lesser among managers in middle and senior management positions, the role of organizational culture in improving ethicality warrants added attention. *They identified future researcher might incorporate other research methodologies in measuring organizational cynicism with other attributes.*

Khan, M. A. (2014), proved that organizational cynicism will positively influence turnover intentions. Further studies should investigate organizational cultural variables and for variation in results to be conducted on different industries. Sheel, R. C., & Vohra, N. (2016). explored the role of positive corporate social responsibility (CSR) perceptions of employees in reducing cynicism toward the organization. As employee involvement in CSR activities through volunteering could influence the perceptions of CSR among employees, the moderating impact of employee volunteering on the relationship between CSR perceptions and cynicism is also tested. Result showed that positive perceptions of CSR were negatively correlated with organizational cynicism for both managers and non-managers, with significantly stronger negative correlations among managers.

Shaharruddina, et al. (2016), identified that future researcher also could possibly investigate the effect of demographic variables as moderators or antecedents to organizational cynicism. This can be conducted by including whether employees's age, gender, marital status, educational background and monthly income (salary) could influence the level of cynicism in a workplace. For instance, because the data consists of more than 50 % officers who are married, it could be investigated whether their marital status can affect differently the way they perceive fairness and consequently how they behave at work. Future researchers can also study this phenomenon in different other sectors like banking, educational institutions and different areas of services sectors. *Future researchers can use different variables as moderator e.g. employee engagement, employee empowerment or employee participation*

etc. to analyze the relationship between organizational cynicism and employee's performance. However, there are few researches done in India but need more understanding on the concept of organizational cynicism. It has been observed that the studies so far have been focused on foreign context.

5. HOW TO OVERCOME CYNICAL BEHAVIOR AMONG EMPLOYEES

Researchers have identified several activities, behaviour and attitudes managers can employ to overcome organizational cynicism:

Wilkerson JM, Evans WR, Davis WD (2008). stated in his studies that when employees in highly respected positions badmouth the organization, a ripple effect can ensue, because the behaviour is seen as acceptable and accepted—this then leads to more badmouthing and more cynicism.

Rubin RS et al. (2009). Suggested to reduce your own cynicism. Leadership that is cynical—particularly about change initiatives “reap what they sow” in that their cynicism about organizational change breeds employee cynicism. It is clearly in the organization's best interests to attempt to proactively defuse leaders' cynical attitudes toward change through transformational leader behaviour.

Reichers A, Wanous J & Austin J (1997). suggested that to include employees in decision-making. Employees are more likely to be cynical about decisions when they were unable to participate—in a meaningful way—in making those decisions. This is particularly relevant to organizational change efforts; involving employees in the change process is one means to avert the development of OC.

Johnson J & O'Leary-Kelly (2003). recommended that Psychological contract violations—the perception that the organization failed to keep its promises—has been found to be a key determinant of OC.

Read E & Laschinger HK (2013). suggested that organizations should publicize changes, no matter how small and explain past failures rather than ignoring them.

So, we also suggest that managers in organizations need to play a more active role in preventing cynicism. Learn more about the causes of cynicism, managers can address certain issues that have a tendency to trigger such unwanted behaviors. Having weekly one on one conversations with each employee. Managers need to be more understanding when dealing with all employees. Thus, emotional intelligence trainings for all managers can be effective. Organizations must learn to manage values with care to avoid disillusionment about salary, benefits, perks and other facilities and recruit people who have lower general cynicism may overcome the situation of organizational cynicism.

6. CONCLUSION

Organizational cynicism is related to negative feeling and attitude (lacking commitment, satisfaction and turnover intentions) towards organization. The results of the study revealed that Organizational cynicism has impact on job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational justice, organizational commitment, organizational trust, innovation related behavior and employee turnover intentions. Our study contributes to a better understanding of Organizational cynicism and its

relationship with other variables. We also suggest that more studies investigate organizational practices that can reduce employee cynicism or factors that help to diminish its negative consequences.

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